

HB 5959 and HB 5804
December 3, 2014

Statement of Cynthia Pasky, CEO, Strategic Staffing Solutions to Hon. Frank Foster, Chair, Commerce Committee

This statement is offered in support of HB 5804 as well as HB 5959 if it is amended to add “gender identity” or “gender expression.” I am providing the statement as founder and CEO of Strategic Staffing Solutions, a global IT staffing and business services company, and as the co-chair of the Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition, a collaboration of the business community to advocate that our state human rights law -- the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act -- be expanded this year to include “sexual orientation and gender identity.”

At Strategic Staffing Solutions, we are constantly in the market for talent for our company and global customer base. When recruiting, we look at someone’s talent and capabilities, regardless of their age, gender identity, race, nationality or sexual orientation. S³ celebrates the diversity of our team, customers, and consultants and likewise sees this diversity as core to our competitive advantage.

As a co-chair of the **Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition**, we believe that this amendment is necessary to make our state attractive for investment by existing and new businesses. While Michigan has climbed to number five in the nation for new job creation, the only way to continue this momentum is to retain and attract talent by sending a resounding message globally that our state is welcoming to all talent.

For Michigan to drive further growth, the Legislature must act to expand the protections in the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to protect current and future residents from discrimination based on sexual orientation, as well as gender identity.

The core principle of recruitment is how S³ has grown rapidly as a Detroit-based company for nearly 25 years, and this is the only way our state will be able to sustain and catalyze further economic growth. This core principle is also one that S³ shares with our corporate and civic partners that are members of the Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition. Collectively, we understand the importance of accelerating our economic progress by making Michigan competitive in the global marketplace.

Our state has a strong history of leadership in the fight against discrimination. Under Governor Bill Milliken’s visionary leadership, in 1976 Michigan passed the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act, positioning our state as one of the first in the nation to make it illegal to discriminate based on religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status or marital status. This was not the most popular decision at that time, but it was the right decision to move our state forward. Forty years later it is time to modernize the law and do the right thing for our community, the right thing for our economy, and the right thing for Michigan.